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TO: C/Congressional Support

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Resource Management Staff
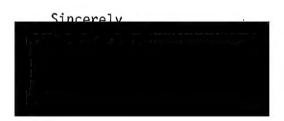
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1 March 1979

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Mr. James O. Bush
Permanent House Select
 Committee on Intelligence
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Jim:

Attached as promised in my letter of 22 February, are answers to five of the six questions posed by the Subcommittee on Evaluation following the DCI's appearance on 6 February 1979.

The first question, concerning release of the PRC(I)'s National Intelligence Topics, will be addressed separately.

Sincerely

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Attachment
    As Stated

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QUESTION 2: Will you describe the process by which these national intelligence topics were developed?

RESPONSE: Executive Order 12036 makes clear the consumers' primary responsibility to set priorities for the Intelligence Community. The National Intelligence Topics, developed by the policymakers themselves and approved by the NSC Policy Review Committee, are the formal expressions of these consumer priorities. The big difference between the NIT process and those it replaced--such as the Key Intelligence Questions (KIQs)--is that guidance in the past has been prepared by the Intelligence Community based on what it assumed were the policymakers' needs.

The NITs actually include two separate sets of priorities:

o   Topics of Basic Interest intended to guide the development of capabilities for collection, research, and analysis over the longer term;

o   The more specific Current Interest topics that tell intelligence collectors and producers what top policymakers need over the next six to nine months.

The nature and priority of both the long-term and current topics are determined by these principal consumers acting jointly as the PRC(I) and in accordance with Executive Order 12036 (1-202). (No intelligence methodology is employed in developing the topics, aside from certain staff support, since they originate not with the Intelligence Community but with the policymakers.) The substance of the NITs is established as a result of a process that involves canvassing of the key policymakers, circulating of draft questions among the members of the PRC(I), and, finally, review and formal approval of the NITs by the PRC(I) itself. The relative priorities are proposed and negotiated in a similar manner by the DCI (as Chairman) and individual members of the Committee.

Following procedures worked out last fall by the Steering Group led by D/NFAC, the Current Interest NITs and their respective priorities are reviewed and updated on a Community-wide basis every four months. The review process, guided by the NIOs and production managers in NFAC, INR, and DIA, follows the same pattern outlined above, i.e., obtaining the views and proposals of primary policymakers, consolidating and circulating them for general consideration, and presenting the proposed revisions to the PRC(I) for their final approval.

The impact of the NITs on resource allocation can be seen in the current planning efforts of ORPA, OER, and OGCR to focus analytic attention and assets on areas and issues that figure prominently in the NITs.

QUESTION 3: In the overview book on the National Foreign Intelligence Program, there is a well written paragraph concerning the problems related to product quality, the need to have motivated analysts and production managers, the requirement to stay in close touch with key policy and other users, the need to develop interdisciplinary analyses, the need to communicate uncertainty in the data and the need to alert analysts to explore alternative hypotheses in issues that may impact on US national security interests. How do you propose to get at some of these key issues which the Committee recognizes are important in achieving improved product quality?

RESPONSE: In order to enhance the analyst career path within NFAC, on 18 January the Deputy Director of NFAC designated within each production office certain GS-15 and supergrade positions that would be called "Senior Intelligence Analysts." At the same time, the criteria to qualify for the positions were announced. These include doctoral-level educational or work experience, linguistic facility, overseas residence, area or functional specialization, and other similar criteria. Senior Intelligence Analysts would have no managerial responsibilities, but rather would attain their status by developing substantive expertise of an exceptional nature. NFAC has taken on the obligation to ensure that analysts who want to become SIAs have the opportunity to meet the criteria. Similar criteria will probably be developed for NFAC personnel who wish to pursue a managerial track in their careers.

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We stress the need to stay in regular contact with the policy community. In fact, the policy community is eager to have us do so. Our NIOs meet regularly with intelligence consumers in their substantive areas and refer back to the production offices in NFAC and the Intelligence Community the needs that must be fulfilled. The production offices and their individual divisions maintain a regular liaison with the NSC Staff, the policy levels of the Departments of State, Defense, Treasury, Commerce, Agriculture, and others. Information is shared both ways.

Likewise, we are in the early stages of our efforts to get analysts systematically to address alternative hypotheses. This is easier to do on relatively longer lead-time work than in short-deadline production, and we hope to see this undertaken more in NIEs, IIMs, and formal NFAC Assessments. To institute this objective as a regular feature of our profession, however, will require time. The nature of both the policy and intelligence communities has for years indicated an interest in brief treatment and net judgments on any subject. Thus, we have a pattern of many years to alter.

QUESTION 4: In describing analytical problems, you state that there is a need to improve analysts' ability to communicate the unavoidable levels of uncertainty and their implications for policy choices, and also to "nourish in the expert a sensitivity to the unexpected." Clearly, these are very important goals. Presumably, training and constant guidance and support in analytical methodology must be a part of the solution. However, elements like the Information Science Center, and ORPA's Office of Methods and Forecasting do not appear to receive much emphasis. What measures are being taken to address these problems?

RESPONSE: The Information Science Center and ORPA's Analytical Methods and External Research Staff (AMERS) have reached a large number of analysts through training and familiarization programs that they have designed. AMERS augments this general exposure by close analyst support on a wide range of substantive issues. But the use of systematic analysis does not lead necessarily to the communication of uncertainty. Indeed, when people come in contact with machine derived analyses or graphics, they often feel a dangerous sense of certainty in their results. One function of the ISC and AMERS is therefore to remind analysts of the nature of the data from which their findings derive.

Our problem is to find a way to express verbally the uncertainty which incomplete data reflect in each specific case. This requires a regular process of analyzing the components of evidence that would lead to better understanding, and then deciding which of these can usefully be communicated to policymakers. When we have done so, they have been grateful for our candor. As outlined in Question 3, we intend to alter the culture of intelligence production to require this approach more often.

QUESTION 5: What is the relationship between the NIO for Warning and the National Intelligence Tasking Office (NITO) for Warning and Crisis Management? Does either one of these positions hold the responsibility for determining whether a given collection system, for example, may be justified as essential for I&W?

RESPONSE: The DCI has established NIO/W as his senior staff officer for warning matters. As such, he coordinates Community activities in the warning field, but does not have operational responsibilities. His instrument for Community coordination is the Warning Working Group, of which he is Chairman and DD/DCI/CT is a member.

The NITO (I&W/CM) is responsible to the Director/NITO for the collection aspects of warning problems. He carries out these duties in coordination with NIO/W and supports the latter's activities.

One duty of NIO/W is to advise the Deputy to the DCI for Collection Tasking and the Deputy to the DCI for Resource Management on warning activities that relate to their responsibilities. A question as to the essentiality for I&W of a proposed system would be referred by the deputies to NIO/W for a judgment. NIO/W in turn would ask the Warning Working Group to address the issue collectively. If the question is related to collection, NITO (I&W/CM) would play a role through the Warning Working Group mechanism.

QUESTION 6: Given the need to encourage analysts in each of the geographic regions to consider the big picture, what is the rationale for limiting SWS participation only to the NIO meetings on China and the Soviet Union? Should they not also participate in consideration of warning implications of events in Africa, the Middle East, and other regions?

RESPONSE: The Strategic Warning Staff will not be restricted to attending NIO meetings only on the Soviet Union and China. They will be invited to attend any meetings in any part of the world where warning implications are being discussed.

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